

May 31, 2005

Dear Jim:

With Mississippi's budget now in place, I would like to revisit the kind scholarship offer you unveiled to the State Legislature in March of \$50 million for Mississippi at-risk students who are enrolled in the Barksdale Reading Institute program.

You suggested that the eventual decision to move forward with your gift would rest upon State Superintendent of Education Dr. Henry Johnson's approval of the final budget for K-12 education, and not necessarily the 15% increase over last year's funding that was originally requested. As you may be aware, the House and Senate recently came to an agreement on a budget that will provide more than \$2 billion for Mississippi's schools.

At a time when virtually all of state government is receiving less funding, K-12 education is receiving 7.2% more than last year in the state's new budget. By doing so, Mississippi is also honoring its commitment to an 8% pay raise for Mississippi teachers. In an article appearing in this past Sunday's *Clarion-Ledger*, Dr. Johnson stated that the numbers agreed upon are acceptable for school progress.

It is my sincere hope that this budget, along with Dr. Johnson's endorsement, have met your expectations. As always, I look forward to working with you for what is best for Mississippi's schoolchildren.

Sincerely,

Haley Barbour